

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**  
**JUNE 12, 1997**

PROJECT REVIEWED

Experience Music Project

Convened: 3:00 PM

Adjourned: 4:00 PM

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Barbara Swift, Chair  
Moe Batra  
Carolyn Darwish  
Robert Foley  
Jon Layzer  
Rick Sundberg

STAFF PRESENT

Marcia Wagoner  
Vanessa Murdock  
Michael Read

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061297.1      Project: **EXPERIENCE MUSIC PROJECT**  
Phase: Design Development  
Presenters: Frank Gehry, Frank O. Gehry & Associates Inc.  
Jim Glymph, Frank O. Gehry & Associates Inc.  
Craig Webb, Frank O. Gehry & Associates Inc.  
George Metzger, Frank O. Gehry & Associates Inc.  
Bob Zimmer, Loschky, Marquardt & Nesholm  
Paul Zumwalt, Experience Music Project  
Time: 1 hour (0.3%)

The Experience Music Project is an interactive music and performing arts museum that will be located on the eastern edge of the Seattle Center, on 5th Avenue between Harrison and Thomas Streets. Since the schematic review the following changes have been made to the design. One of the six curved elements has been changed to a cube form. The cube element will face the Fun Forest facility. The five other curved elements will be clustered around the cube which will be highly reflective purple stainless steel. A retractable giant projection screen will hang from the cube form for special screening events. The other five curved elements will be gold and silver stainless steel and painted metal in light blue and red. The wires that were present in the schematic phase, reminiscent of guitar strings, have been removed, as the design has been consolidated and simplified over time. A section of the monorail has been completely enveloped in a highly sculptural manner. A mesh material that will sit on the curved roof is still being developed and may be slightly kinetic.

*For background information on the project, please refer to the following Seattle Design Commission minutes: 3/16/95, 7/20/95, 9/19/96 and 10/24/96.*

### **Discussion**

**Batra:** Is the purple cube portion of the building structurally designed for a helipad?

**Gehry:** No. We had originally wanted to build a roof terrace, but the code restrictions are too great for the budget.

**Batra:** What are your plans for the plaza where people will be watching the large screen that hangs from the purple cube?

**Webb:** We have met with the other site partners; the Fun Forest and the Space Needle regarding this space, and have agreed to continue to meet periodically to develop a landscape plan for this plaza area in front of the screen. We have also spoken about what sort of treatment to give the Harrison Street turnaround and have considered a large specimen tree.

**Gehry:** I would like to take the street trees off Fifth Avenue, but I know that will not happen.

- Swift:** The Commission has been a strong proponent of a strong treatment of the site on which this building will sit. The treatment needs to be able to stand up to the exuberance of the building.
- Webb:** We had suggested paving everything on the Thomas Street side, but there is a strong desire to remove as much paving there as possible.
- Layzer:** We reviewed the proposed changes to the Broad Street green last week. You should keep an eye on the Space Needle access from Thomas Street.
- Webb:** I know it is tricky for the trucks to back through a line of trees.
- Gehry:** It makes sense to have a tree at the point of entry, however I would like to see the others taken off Thomas and relocated to Fifth Avenue.
- Swift:** I have been disappointed by the lack of strong forms along Thomas Street.
- Layzer:** Trees do give one a sense of scale. Is the purple cube going to be glass?
- Gehry:** No. Everything is going to be stainless steel except for the red and the blue portions which will be painted metal.
- Swift:** How will natural light penetrate the building?
- Webb:** Skylights will allow light into the main lobby. There won't be any natural light in the exhibit areas.
- Hansmire:** The relationship of this building and site with the Fun Forest still needs to be resolved. I think the trees along Fifth Avenue should remain because they help reduce the scale of the building.
- Swift:** Our comments today really echo those that you heard three weeks ago and are mostly site and context related.
- Hansmire:** The area between EMP and the Fun Forest is the Seattle Center front door to EMP. The edges need to start making a transition back to the Seattle Center, but the area inside those edges can be exuberant, although not overly designed. For instance, I am concerned that the small-grain interlocking paving found elsewhere in the Center is not appropriate for the EMP site.
- Webb:** We are looking to simplify the ground plane.
- Sundberg:** The south edge of the building is much more attractive in this iteration of the design.
- Foley:** I am intrigued by how people will enter the gathering plaza between EMP and the Fun Forest. I like the way the turnaround entry is compressed. I think the entry onto the Thomas Street pedestrian axis could be opened up.
- Webb:** Where the gathering plaza meets Thomas Street is a natural opening. That juncture is unresolved due to the proposed new entry and service access to the Space Needle.
- Hansmire:** The Seattle Center site plan is fragmented. Smaller pieces get pulled into the larger units. I like the unit that is formed by EMP and the Fun Forest - it is different from the rest of the Center. I wouldn't mind it spilling over into the Space Needle unit.
- Foley:** I can imagine this part of the Center being fun, wild and exciting.

**Hansmire:** I think there are many opportunities to do something really different on the Fun Forest side of EMP in terms of site treatment. I would however advocate for street trees along Fifth Avenue.

**Zumwalt:** The project looks forward to continued involvement with the Design Commission.

**ACTION:** **The Commission recommends approval and enthusiastically endorses the project. The Commission is very interested in how this unique building will tie into its surrounding context and urges the design teams of EMP and the Fun Forest to treat the area between the two facilities as a related zone, allowing the space to be strong and exuberant. In addition, the Commission would like to thank the design team for their responsiveness to the Commission's comments and suggestions throughout the review process.**

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